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AUTHOR Passow, A. Harry
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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests 15 steps school superintendents can take to help close the gap between the educationally disadvantaged and other student populations. Superintendents should do the following: (1) create a vision of what an achieving educational community is; (2) implement goals and strategies which create a positive educational climate; (3) give highest priority to creating the conditions which will attract, retain, reward, and nurture a competent, effective staff; (4) model a research-based approach for the professional staff in designing curriculum and instruction; (5) make instructional program and service coordination a high priority for building principals and staff members; (6) help develop and implement curriculum and instruction which is developmental rather than remedial; (7) help create an early childhood program; (8) ensure availability of appropriate compensatory education; (9) provide leadership in creating an effective policy toward grouping of students; (10) help create an effective policy for identifying and nurturing the educationally disadvantaged gifted and talented; (11) help change secondary schools into healthy, nurturing environments; (12) develop and implement a policy regarding instruction of students with limited or no English; (13) develop a policy regarding equal access to instructional technology; (14) develop a policy for involving parents; and (15) help develop an educative community in which school plays a central, coordinating role. (PS)

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Closing the Achievement Gap between Educationally Disadvantaged and Other Populations

A. Harry Passow
Jacob H. Schiff Professor of Education
Teachers College, Columbia University

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An important objective in the Long-Range Plan for Texas Public Education is that of closing the achievement gap between educationally disadvantaged students and other populations. The educationally disadvantaged students, the "at risk students" are one of the focal points of the Plan. It can be argued that this is a key objective and that the Long-Range Plan cannot be realized unless the educationally disadvantaged students "meet or exceed educational performance standards."

The Long-Range Plan documents some aspects of this gap--the lower pass rate of the disadvantaged students on TEAMS mathematics and English language arts tests, the high dropout rates among Hispanic and black students, the low college-going rates among minorities, and the high unemployment rates among disadvantaged youth. The Plan notes that the percentage of disadvantaged students is increasing even faster than the student population as a whole with an expected increase of over 100,000 or nine percent during the next four years alone. But these statistics reflect only a part of the consequences of our failure to develop individual potential to the fullest in a large and growing segment of our children and youth.

A paper presented in Austin, Texas, at the Texas Education Agency Annual Mid-Winter Superintendents Conference on January 28, 1987.

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In 1970, the Urban Education Task Force of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, in what became a well-concealed report which examined problems and solutions related to urban schooling, urged the development of master plans, arguing that such plans

> . . .must concomitantly deal with causes and symptoms, must be conceived within a framework of overall urban problem solving rather than education per se, and must encompass all educational level. . . .Moreover, this plan must reflect expansion and enrichment of what constitutes "education." Within the educational plan, there must be stress on developing appropriate curricular designs, consumer participation, staff development programs for all concerned, supportive services, and evaluation. Finally, it must be interrelated with other facets of the larger urban problems, such as housing, employment, recreation, and health.

Although the Urban Education Task Force's focus was on urban schools, the advice is appropriate for all schools and communities with disadvantaged populations. I would argue that the development of a master plan is critical if we are to close the gap between the disadvantaged and other students and that the superintendent of schools is the key individual in the development of that plan. Without the strong leadership of a superintendent of schools who conceives of the development of a master plan for closing the achievement gap as having a very high priority and communicates this commitment through his/her actions to all those persons who must be involved in its design and implementation, either no master plan will be developed or what planning is done is going to be inadequate.

In the short time available, I would like to suggest some aspects of the leadership which the superintendent of schools must provide and some

elements of such a master plan.

1. The superintendent of schools must provide leadership in creating a vision of what an achieving educational community is like. The Long-Range Plan refers not only to cognitive academic achievement goals but to "critical thinking and problem-solving skills, the development of self-esteem, respect for others, responsible behavior, citizenship skills, and interpersonal effectiveness." Is the vision one of a school and community which strive to meet the twin goals of equity and excellence or does it focus only on a conception of excellence as defined by test performance? Is it a vision which is, as the National Commission on Excellence in Education put it, "based on the beliefs that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured, that a solid high school education is within the reach of virtually all, and that life-long learning will equip people with the skills required for new careers and for citizenship" (p. An achieving educational community is one in which students, parents, professional staff, and community believe that all youngsters have the potential for achieving and in which all are actively and cooperatively involved in trying to nurture individual potential. The creation of a school- and community-wide vision of the concept of "education for all" is the first task of the superintendent and it is not a responsibility which can be relegated to other staff members although others also have contributions to make to the educational vision which will guide the schools and community.

2. The superintendent of schools must understand and implement goals and strategies which contribute to the creation of a positive

educational climate in which high expectations for student achievement and behavior are communicated and realized. A recent Department of Education publication, Effective Compensatory Education Sourcebook, reports that researchers have found thirteen attributes consistently present in effective schools and classroom, six of which are organizational and seven are instructional. Organizationally, (1) leaders involve staff, parents and community in setting meaningful goals and objectives which have to do with self-concepts and attitudes as well as academic achievement; (2) the availability of clear goals and objectives makes possible coordination of regular and special programs , increasing the opportunities to learn by reinforcing basic skills in different instructional settings; (3) parent involvement includes collaborative efforts which extend the classroom into the home by training parents to reinforce academic and social behaviors at home; (4) professional development and training are valued and ongoing functions; (5) program evaluation is an integral part of school improvement efforts with evaluative information used for instructional decision-making; and (6) leadership is strong in two overlapping categories---attending to the goals of the school and supporting staff members in utilizing fully their capabilities.

3. The superintendent must give highest priority to creating the conditions which will attract, retain, reward, and nurture a competent, effective staff. There is no question that the quality of teachers and their teaching is the keystone to closing the achievement gap. Much has been written recently about the need for raising the academic standards for

prospective teachers, strengthening their liberal arts background, raising salaries, providing for merit pay and career, and other proposals all aimed at making teaching more attractive and attracting better quality teachers. Less attention has been given to ways of attracting and retaining good quality teachers from minority populations. In fact, the number and proportion of beginning teachers from minority groups is declining. The proposals for reform in teacher education will be sharply debated during the coming year. The forum for debate at the moment seems to include schools and colleges of education, state departments of education, the NEA and AFT, and even business and industry. It is essential that superintendents of schools become involved and bring to these debates the expertise and experiential reality needed if teacher education reform is to achieve the goal of attracting, educating, and inducting the quality teachers needed to provide a quality education for all students.

Whatever reforms are implemented at the preservice level, in the long run they will be ineffective if we do not create the conditions in our schools and communities which make effective teaching and learning possible, rewards effective teaching, and brings respect back to the teaching profession. The superintendent of schools plays a key role in the recruitment, induction, retention and continuing education of faculty members.

The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy report, A Nation Prepared, calls for redesigning schools, investing "teachers with a much greater degree of trust and responsibility to render professional judgments about the most appropriate educational treatments for their

students" and for transforming "teaching into a career worth pursuing." While the report's proposals for redesigning of schools may be controversial, the goal of teachers rendering "professional educational treatments for their students"--i.e., designing effective teaching and learning--is one which must be pursued. As Ashburn has put it, "few individuals with the capacity for competence will want to work in a setting which does not appreciate, support, or allow for competence." A common theme in the reform reports is that the key to attracting and retaining competent teachers is to transform the teachers' work environment so that the possibilities for success are enhanced and the school and community recognizes and rewards achievement. Too often, teaching educationally disadvantaged students is a frustrating job. Transforming the teacher's work environment involves a good many things including reasonable class sizes, appropriate curriculum and instructional resources, essential support services, regularizing of means for breaking down the isolation of the classroom teacher, elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy, elimination of disruptions to the teaching-learning process, and opportunities for sharing and for renewal.

This transformation requires that the school building, rather than the individual classrooms or teachers, be the unit for developing better understandings regarding the nature of the educational gap. Griffin suggests that school level leadership can be made more efficient and effective if it is focused on schoolwide context issues, arguing that since effective schools research indicates that context has a powerful influence on outcomes, then context-oriented staff development makes sense.

Referring to Chapter I studies, Griffin asserts that "the isolation of Chapter I programs from the ongoing instructional system puts many participating youngsters at educational risk." Therefore, to concentrate staff development aimed at increasing the power of the school as a whole (versus only a Chapter I designated specialist, for example) seems to be a more potentially powerful influence on disadvantaged students.

Research by Purkey and Smith suggests that teacher growth is most probable when teachers have systematic and consistent opportunities to interact around professional, school-based issues and when opportunities are provided to link teachers with in-school and out-of-school technical assistance. On the basis of studies of effective staff development programs, it seems clear that closing the educational gap will require schoolwide staff development for understanding the needs and prospects for the disadvantaged population--in the context of the total school environment. As Griffin puts it:

> Staff development that focuses the environment in all its contextual complexity upon students; academic and social advancement is believed to be more powerful than staff that isolates teachers from one another, concentrates upon segments of curriculum and instruction, creates "minicontexts" that may be in contrast to the larger context, and dilutes rather than strengthens the accumulated power of schooling upon student outcomes.

The superintendent must provide leadership in creating effective school-based staff development programs-- programs which, according to Griffin, should be context-sensitive, knowledge-based, participatory and collaborative, ongoing, developmental, and analytic and reflective.

4. The superintendent of schools must model a research-based approach for the professional staff in designing curriculum and instruction. For well over twenty years now, practitioners and researchers have been involved in designing, implementing, and studying compensatory education efforts. In addition, there has been an explosion in research dealing with teaching and learning in general, much of which has implications for educating the disadvantaged. While we do not have nor should we ever expect definitive, final answers from the research regarding the teaching and learning problems we face, we do have insights which should guide or planning and decision-making. This research and experience base is now more readily available to practitioners and decision-makers. The superintendent of schools should model the behavior of using research and evaluation data in his/her planning and decision making. For example, the instructional attributes consistently found in effective classrooms and schools include: (1) the use of appropriate instructional methods, materials and approaches involving such things as instructional style and pacing, student-teacher interactions and student grouping strategies; (2) maximum use of academic learning time; (3) high expectations for student learning and behavior; (4) closely monitored student progress; (5) regular feedback and reinforcement; (6) reward and recognition of excellence. There is a research base which can assist staff members in their planning; we do not have to constantly reinvent the wheel, flounder about, or choose aimlessly from alternatives. What does research tell us about a particular problem or area? How can we use the best available knowledge? How do we make choices without knowing what the alternatives or options are?

5. The superintendent should provide the leadership needed to make instructional program and service coordination a high priority for building principals and staff members. Studies of coordination of various special or supplementary programs with core or regular programs consistently indicate a lack of serious efforts to achieve this end. Seldom are their procedures for cooperative planning among the various content area and categorical program planners, either at the district level or the building level. Even more rare are there district or building-level policies which would foster cooperative planning among the various suppliers of programs or services.

Students served by various Chapter I programs have actually ended up with less instructional time than students not served by such programs with lack of coordination resulting in reduced services. One study of teachers in 46 elementary schools indicated that half of the classroom teachers reported that reading resource teachers rarely or never offered them instructional information, suggestions or materials. Another study reported that core program and special program teachers were confused about who was responsible for what aspects of instructional planning and delivery. Still another study found that over a third of core program and support teachers could not remember when they had last had either an informal or formal discussion of their students' needs, progress or concerns. In one study, two of every three support program teachers were unable to identify the reading instructional material the remedial student used in the core classroom reading context so that remedial services in the two settings were generally independent of each other and unrelated.

Often there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of pull-out programs and of resource rooms with very divergent views found among core program teachers, resource room support staff, and administrators. Instructional leadership must provide for planning coordination between core curriculum programs and support programs and amongst the various support programs. Leadership must be provided by the administrative staff in studying the instructional and resource fragmentation which results in disadvantaging the disadvantaged even further. What is needed, as Allington and Johnson put it, is "instructional congruence"--congruence between curricula, the what is to be taught in what order and using what materials; congruence in the methods of instruction and teaching strategies used; and congruence in articulation of instruction and services provided students. Services must be provided, as Peterson puts it, in ways which "promote integration of the academic content for the student and integration across learning tasks not fragmentation."

The most widespread approach to compensatory education involves is a pull-out program--i.e., providing instruction and services in a location other than the regular classroom. While widely practiced and usually aimed at providing additional or remedial instruction in reading and mathematics, such programs are often less than effective because they label students and alter teachers' expectations for those students and prevent such students from engaging in what Smith and Glass call "potentially beneficial tutoring relationships and friendships with students of other ability levels and ethnic groups."

6. The superintendent must provide leadership in designing and

implementing curriculum and instruction which is developmental in nature rather than remedial. Studies indicate that Chapter I students receive more instruction in factual and lower-level skills and less in higher-order skills. For instance, in pull-out mathematics programs, students are more likely to receive drill and practice in basic facts and skills than instruction on higher-order problem-solving skills. Cognitive science research in mathematics and reading indicates the importance of emphasis on meaning and understanding beginning in early elementary grades. Compensatory education students are getting even less instruction in comprehension and meaning than their more advantaged counterparts, despite the fact that research indicates that they are capable of engaging in such instruction.

Studies of classroom processes in reading have shown that teachers of low-achieving students give far less emphasis to meaning and more emphasis to accurate reading than for higher achieving students. For example, the Commission on Reading concluded on the basis of research data that:

> From the very beginning children should be given all of the elements necessary for constructing meaning. This is important because reading at this early level is a new enterprise, and children must be made aware that reading is always directed toward meaning.

Both in the core program and in compensatory program, instruction must spend adequate time and give adequate content coverage to higher-order as well as lower-order skills. The concept which guides most instruction for disadvantaged students is that they must be taught

and drilled in the basics alone, thus they are further deprived of adequate instruction.

Based on her cognitive strategy research and that of others, Peterson concludes that low-achieving students "can successfully be taught cognitive strategies such as memory strategies, elaboration strategies, comprehension monitoring, self-questioning, rehearsal strategies, planning and goal setting, comprehension strategies, verbal self-instruction and self-regulation, problem solving strategies, hypothesis generation and study skills." Peterson has found that thinking skills intervention provides lower achieving students with strategies and processes which they can then use in learning more effectively. Compensatory education should give greater emphasis to developing students' cognitive strategies--the strategies needed for learning or, if you will, the learning-how-to-learn skills--and less on drill-and-practice remediation.

The importance of instructional time and content coverage as variables which affect students' achievement--what the literature refers to as "Academic Learning Time" has been much studied in the past decade or so.It is clear that the quantity of time is not nearly as important as the quality of that time or the actual cognitive processes in which students are engaged. Again, Peterson's findings regarding mathematics are relevant not only for that subject:

> For lower-ability (or lower achieving) students, increasing their levels of engagement may be a necessary but insufficient condition for improving their higher level and conceptual thinking

> in mathematics. For these students, what might be needed is instruction that ensures not only that they are engaged, but also that they are engaged in effective cognitive processes and strategies that will lead to improving their achievement of higher-level skills in mathematics.

Three ways in which teacher behavior regarding compensatory education can have negative consequences have been suggested by Peterson: (1) classroom teachers may be less likely to encourage and demand autonomous learning behavior from low-achieving students; (2) teachers may give students easy tasks on which they can succeed rather than more difficult tasks which will challenge learners and teach them to persist; and (3) labeling of Chapter I students may have the unintended consequences of lowering teacher expectations, these lowered expectations are then translated into what content is taught and how it is taught to particular students.

A curriculum for disadvantaged students must be a rich and balanced curriculum, as rich and balanced as that provided to high achieving students; a curriculum which is not limited to a narrow conception of compensatory education as remedial education. A curriculum for the disadvantaged for disadvantaged students must provide the same opportunities for enhancement and enrichment as is provided for other students. What is needed is equal access to knowledge and compensatory education which will enable the student to successfully engage in the opportunities and experiences provided. A watered-down, diluted curriculum, limited to instruction aimed at success on tests of minimum

skills, does not constitute an appropriate curriculum for the disadvantaged. This is not to say that student success on minimum skills tests is not important; rather, it is to argue that success minimal achievement is only a part of the total educational goals and objectives we have for all students, including the disadvantaged.

7. The superintendent must insure that a well-designed early childhood program is in place for all children in the district. The reports on long-term gains from early intervention programs provide a strong case for well-designed early childhood education programs in contrast to simple child-care. Clearly, the experiences of the past twenty years have made clear the significance of early childhood education in closing the achievement gap.

All young children need access to programs which are focused not only on the language and cognitive development of the child but his/her affective development as well, including acquisition of the skills of "being a student." A well-designed early childhood program is not a downward extension of an elementary school program but one in which the curriculum, materials, and instruction are based on the particular needs of young children. For children with limited-English ability and those whose families live in poverty, early childhood education programs which contribute to both intellectual-language as well as socio-emotional development are absolutely essential. Effective early childhood programs involve parents, especially mothers, in nurturing their children. To be fully effective, such programs must be articulated with elementary education programs.

8. The superintendent of schools must insure, through building leadership, that appropriate compensatory education is provided for all educationally disadvantaged students. Recent studies of Chapter I indicate that as many as 60 percent of the poor and low-achieving students do not receive Chapter I services. Nationwide, over 70 percent of all elementary schools receive Chapter I funds and since many of them have relatively few poor, low-achieving students the services often go to higher-achieving students in those schools. While such issues surrounding the delivery of Chapter I as whether resources should be placed in those areas and schools with the highest concentrations of poverty, schools face the need to provide appropriate compensatory education for all educationally disadvantaged students, not just those who are selected for Chapter I.

Educationally disadvantaged students are not a homogeneous group although they usually have poverty, minority status, and low achievement in common. All educationally disadvantaged need to be identified and the program so designed that all teachers are involved in compensatory instruction, not just those designated as Chapter I teachers. The core classroom teacher who adapts and modifies his/her instruction will provide a different kind of instruction from that of the teacher of a pull-out class. Brophy concludes from his studies that "the most basic and consistently replicated findings link students' achievement gains to their opportunity to learn material, and in particular to the degree to which their teachers carry the content to them personally through active instruction and direct supervision of their learning efforts." To repeat,

compensatory education should not be limited to pull-out remedial classes which can only provide for some of disadvantaged students in need of such assistance, especially in schools with large concentrations of poor and minority students. Pull-out programs become problematic when they are perceived as the total or sole intervention strategy. What is needed is a school-wide strategy that puts professional force behind increasing educational opportunity for all students including those who are educationally disadvantaged. All teachers need to understand what teachers who are effective with closing the educational gap do with respect to managing instruction--giving information, asking questions, providing feedback, providing opportunities for acquiring cognitive strategies, nurturing positive attitude toward learning and achieving. All need to know how to create a climate for achieving in the classroom and in the school--business-like and goal-oriented, warm, interactive and supportive.

Whatever remedial or alternative programs are provided, compensatory education must be approached as an integral part of what Glaser calls "adaptive education" which is based on the assumption "that students learn in different ways and at different rates and, as a result, effective school programs require both the inclusion of a variety of instructional techniques and learning experiences that match the needs of each student and the allocation of adequate amounts of time for all students to learn." Leadership must focus on the nature and the quality of the regular education program as a significant way of influencing instructional practices for the educationally disadvantaged.

9. The superintendent of schools must provide leadership in creating an effective policy toward grouping of students. The issues regarding ability grouping are well-rehearsed having been with us for almost a century now. These issues cannot be reviewed here but only some aspects of the problem. As Carter reported from the Sustaining Effects Study:

> The typical mode of special CE instruction was a pullout setting. The pullout setting seems to offer a positive learning environment; when compared to regular instructional settings, pullout was associated with smaller instructional groups, higher staff-to-student ratios, more student on-task behavior, less teacher time in behavioral management, more harmonious classroom atmosphere, fewer negative comments by teachers, and a higher quality of cognitive monitoring, on-task monitoring, and organization of activities.

But, positive as those observations are, there is increasing concern that pull-out programs have many undesirable consequences as well, including decreasing the quantity and quality of instruction in other non-compensatory areas, creating a stigma associated with compensatory education (i.e., negative attitudes and expectations as a result of labeling and grouping students), increasing fragmentation of learning, decreasing core teachers' sense of responsibility for disadvantaged students, increasing the possibilities for resegregation, reducing the possible positive student interactions, creating a sense of isolation among the disadvantaged, and preventing use of such strategies as peer tutoring and cooperative learning.

There are indications that, as Vanecko et al. have pointed out, "the

pullout model has not necessarily been selected for pedagogic reasons, but rather to comply with state and local perceptions of federal requirements particularly the so-called "supplement-not-supplant" provision. Gaffney and Schember have observed that some states have promulgated overly restrictive policies concerning the types of program which may be funded: "though Title I never so stated, some program administrators believed pullout designs were legally required, or necessary to avoid audit problems; and some states refused to approve any inclass programs." In 1978, Congress tried to clarify the requirements by asserting that Title I did not require any particular instructional strategy and directed that regulations inform administrators how to design inclass as well as pull-out programs. In 1981, Congress stated that pull-out programs could not be required to demonstrate compliance with the supplement-not-supplant aspect of the new law.

There is little question that the setting in which instruction takes place has a significant impact on student achievement. When pull-out programs are used by a district, they should be used because of their pedagogical promise. Flexible grouping both within the class and outside the class which facilitates specific and direct instruction should be the basis for a district's policy. In determining what groups are needed and how they should be organized, many factors should be taken into account and not simply designation as "disadvantaged." There should be considerable flexibility in reassigning individuals and restructuring groups throughout the school year. The particular grouping used should be selected from the variety of grouping practices available on the basis of

appropriateness and promise. Students should be taught the necessary skills for participation in various kinds of groups. Moreover, the effects of a district's grouping policy should be the focus of continuous study--what are the academic, intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes of the grouping policies? What are the consequences for those in special groups and those who are not? What are the impacts on students, teachers, and others?

10. The superintendent of schools should develop a policy regarding the identification and nurturing of the gifted and talented among the educationally disadvantaged. One definition of the gifted child is a child with potential for outstanding achievement who requires a program and services different from those regularly available. For some, the notion of a disadvantaged gifted child is an anomaly. Yet, research and experience have established the fact that the disadvantaged represent the largest reservoir of untapped talent in our society because of the problems which exist in identifying and nurturing them and, perhaps even more important, our attitudes toward giftedness amongst minorities and the poor. Too often, the assumption is made that there simply are no gifted in a school with concentrations of disadvantaged students.

A policy would encompass specific goals and objectives, identification procedures, design of differentiated opportunities for the gifted to develop their special skills and talents, special guidance and counseling, creation of linkages with appropriate, personal and material resources, enrichment of the learning environment. Issues concerning the settings in which such opportunities will be provided--the pull-out

program is currently the most widely used--need consideration. A program for the gifted and the talented can have a significant positive impact on a school's and community's climate for the pursuit of excellence. In upgrading the achievement and performance of those identified as gifted and talented, a broad concept of excellence and its manifestation is disseminated to the entire school and community. Higher expectations are set and met.

II. The superintendent must provide leadership in formulating policies regarding the reform of secondary schools into healthy, nurturing environments. The bulk of compensatory education efforts is focused on the elementary and early childhood years. Yet, there is evidence that poor academic performance is reversible in the junior high and senior high school years. The school reforms of the 1980s have increased the requirements for more and "more solid" academic programs, higher standards and a general increase in rigor. The Long-Range Plan is unusual in that, unlike most reform reports, it gives attention to closing the educational gap for disadvantaged. Most reform reports of the 1980s, as did the earlier reports of the 1970s, either ignore the disadvantaged or make an assumption that they do not differ from other students and to believe otherwise is anti-intellectual and anti-democratic. As I have written elsewhere,

> The basic concept of compensatory education is to design curricula, instructional strategies, educational resources, and school climates which will stimulate both affective and cognitive development. Simply recommending that school personnel get tougher, stiffen academic demands, and crack down on discipline problems without dealing with the pedagogical/curricular/personnel innovations

needed is tantamount to advising. . . .schools to "try harder and do better."

The policies should deal with issues of equal access to knowledge, curriculum balance with regard to general education and specialized education, concepts of excellence which are to be pursued and rewarded, the school's role in education regarding personal and interpersonal development (including, as the Long-Range Plan puts it, "critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, the development of self-esteem, respect for other, responsible behavior, citizenship skills and interpersonal effectiveness"). Such policies cannot mandate success in closing the gap but they can legitimize the efforts of administrators and faculties in pursuing the necessary staff development and curriculum development. We have no fool-proof programs for the variety of "at-risk" students for whom we must provide--the alienated adolescent, the pregnant teen-ager, the drug abuser, the psychological dropout, and other at-risk students who are not necessarily educationally disadvantaged. But we do have research and experience which can and should guide a research approach to better understanding of the problems locally and guiding our planning. There is, for example, a considerable body of research in the way of curriculum, guidance, career education, work-study and related activities which should guide our dropout prevention efforts. We have had experience in programs which have contributed to increased college-going among minorities and the poor such as Upward Bound, ABC, College-Bound, etc.. These programs and activities cannot be transported intact to our districts and schools but they do provide us with a basis for planning. Watering down content, providing irrelevant options, getting tough, and

similar approaches contribute nothing to the solution of the problems of at-risk students. New curricular and pedagogic strategies, different settings, a nurturing and supportive environment, may alleviate the problems of such students.

12. The superintendent of schools must develop and implement a policy regarding instruction of students with limited or no English. Texas educators are well-aware of the demographic data concerning the increasing number of students who enter schools with limited or no English. The Long-Range Plan notes the anticipated eight percent increase in Hispanic children and youth in the next four years, many of whom will be limited-English speakers. Bilingual education and teaching of English as a second language (TESL) have became significant components of many compensatory education programs. However, in recent years bilingual education has become quite controversial even to the point where a "national movement" has been initiated to make English the "nation's official language." Some proponents of English as the nation's official language are also proponents of students acquiring a foreign language, although some suggest that it should be a language other than the child's native language.

There is simply too much research available regarding the significance of the child's mother tongue in language acquisition and, for that matter, in all cognitive development to be ignored or discounted. No bilingual educator argues that instruction in the mother tongue should replace English language acquisition; bilingual education should mean language proficiency in English and the child's mother tongue. The issue

should be what strategies should be employed to develop this two-language proficiency. Increasingly, some linguisticians and language educators are studying the effectiveness of content-based English language instruction, i.e., the teaching of English through the language of subject matter content, especially science, mathematics and social studies. These strategies which have promise for English language acquisitions beg the questions regarding the acquisition of literacy and proficiency in the mother tongue.

To these issues concerning bilingual education, schools must add the broader issues concerning the importance of cultural pluralism in the school and the curriculum. The superintendent of schools must develop a comprehensive district-wide policy regarding cultural pluralism, bilingualism and the acquisition of English as a second language.

13. The superintendent of schools must develop a policy regarding equal access to instructional technology. In its report titled Educating Americans for the 21st Century, the National Science Board pointed out that there are two aspects of technology of interest to educators--technology as a subject to be studied and technology as an instructional resource. Regarding the first aspect, the Board argued that "Students must be prepared to understand technological innovation, the productivity, the impact of products on technology, and the need for critical evaluation of societal matters involving the consequences of technology." Regarding the second aspect, computers serve as one example of a new technology about which, with which, and from which students can learn. Surveys have indicated serious inequities regarding

access to new technology as content or as instructional resource on the part of disadvantaged populations. There are other technologies for which serious discrepancies in access exist. A policy regarding equity in the area of technology is needed in every district.

14. The superintendent must develop a policy for involving parents in a partnership with schools in educating their children. A great deal is known about the importance of the family as educator yet, as Rich has pointed out, "the focus for and the responsibility for educational reform has centered almost exclusively on the school." Deliberate, organized efforts to involve parents of disadvantaged children in education are only about two dozen years old and these tended to be largely parental involvement through advisory councils. A second, probably more important mode of involvement has been a collaborative partnership approach. Moreover, the demographic changes in the nature of family structure calls for new relationships between the parent(s) and the school.

Parental involvement in advisory and related councils tends to follow legislation or regulation and have received mixed reviews concerning their impact or effectiveness, essentially because of the relative powerlessness of parents. Shields and McLaughlin have found that "compensatory education administrators who value parent involvement tend to run programs in which parents exert a high degree of influence over programmatic decisions." Districts with high levels of involvement tend to establish mechanisms to support parent involvement, such as organized inservice training, opportunities for conference attendance, and district/school-level coordinators to facilitate parent involvement.

Several researchers have found that the involvement of parents as home-based tutors seems to have multiple and direct benefits to both low-income parents and low-income children who come to understand more about the goals, programs, and expectations of the school. As McLaughlin and Shields concluded, strategies "which move the site of interaction to the home, seem to yield positive outcomes for all participants, students, parents, and teachers." They argue for parent involvement because there is "strong evidence that low income and poorly educated parents want to help and want to play a role in their child's education" and what is needed are strategies and structures which will involve these parents. Sieber has argued that "school success is as much an act of social construction undertaken by families and schools as school failure has been shown to be."

There are ways to improve the parental advisory relationship but it is in the collaborative area in which parents and teachers develop or implement new roles and relationships to which policies must attend. For example, Kanter et al. point to four characteristics over which parents could have some influence and which are effective in promoting learning--student values, behavior in school, use of time outside of school, and access to educational resources outside of school. Schools can provide specific help to enhance meaningful parental involvement in their child's education. Such programs should build on what Rich calls "a nondeficit approach to families" using "qualities and innate capacities that virtually all parents have. . .for caring, concern, and love for their children." Such policies should build on an understanding and acceptance

of the parent-as-educator, provide the training and information needed to work with their families, integrate family involvement with the school programs, and provide the necessary instructional materials for home use.

15. The superintendent should establish a policy toward developing an educative community in which the school plays a central, coordinating role. Education and socialization take place in a variety of settings other than schools--libraries, museums, youth groups, television and other media, etc. While there is increasing activity involving the creation of partnerships between business-industry and the schools, relatively little attention is being given specifically to the schools and education in non-school settings. Schools must relate to and capitalize on the formal and informal learning opportunities which exist outside the classroom. A dozen or so years ago, the National Panel on the Education of Adolescents and Youth recommended the appointment of a Superintendent of Education instead of a Superintendent of Schools. This role would involve developing and coordinating all of a community's educational resources, including those of the schools. One suspects that superintendent's might hesitate to extend their roles and responsibilities to this extent but certainly the superintendent can provide leadership in developing an educative community broader than the school itself.

In summing up, I have suggested a good many things which superintendents of schools should do to help close the gap between the educationally disadvantaged and other populations. I have not dealt at all with issues concerning financial support for reasons which are obvious. Nor have I dealt with the specifics of the Long-Range Plan, a plan which

impresses me as an important document which can make a significant contribution to the education of all Texas children and youth. What I have tried to do is to suggest some of the elements to be considered in a "master plan" and have argued that the superintendent of schools is the key individual in the development of such a plan. Finally, I would argue that in planning for closing the gap between the educationally disadvantaged and other populations, you will also be planning to upgrade educational opportunities for all children and youth, with their similarities and their differences, not just the children we include under the rubric of the disadvantaged.